



TAJIKISTAN

Fact sheet

Total population (2008)	7 215 695¹
Child population, 0-17 (2008)	3 118 786
Children as proportion of total population	43%
Children in residential care, absolute number (2007)	10 395
Children in residential care, rates per 100,000 children (2007)	333
Children in residential care, percentage of total child population	0.3%
Proportion of infants below 3 in residential care (2007)	1.6%
Children in guardianship families, absolute number (2007)	459
Adoption, absolute number (2007)	474

Trends in residential care

The Family Code says that children should be referred to institutions as the last resort, although in practice sometimes it is still being chosen as the easiest solution. The rate of children in institutions is not high, also with majority of these children being in boarding schools. Rates for infants (23 per 100,000 of child population 0-3) and children living with disabilities are relatively low and stable. The total number of children in public care is slightly declining (by 14% since 2004).

Residential institutions are under the supervision of different line ministries at the central level, while others operate under local authorities. Most institutions, including for children without parental care, some general boarding schools and some special schools for children with disabilities, and closed-type schools for children with risky behaviour are located under the Ministry of Education (95% of children). The Ministry of Health runs infant homes for children under 3; some of these children are eventually taken back by their families (38%) and many are adopted. The Ministry of Labour and Social protection is in charge of children with learning disabilities. The largest concentration of institutions is in the poorest Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region – 18 (90% of them are boarding schools and built for the purpose of school attendance of children from high mountainous areas). Nearly all children in institutions have at least one parent.

¹ All data are from the State Statistical Committee and the Commission on Child Rights of Tajikistan.

Alternative care

Traditional values encourage families to take responsibility for children left without parental care and not to put children into institutions, but economic hardship and widespread poverty have a strong opposite effect. However, according to available data, the proportion of children placed in alternative family based care amounts to 4% and remains stable. Guardianship is a traditional form of alternative care in Tajikistan. Since the number of children under the guardianship seems to be quite low, it could be assumed that there are many unregistered cases of kinship care, taking into consideration the traditions of extended families in the country.

Adoption is also widespread as a form of providing a substitute family, and it is considered by Family Code as a priority form of placement for children without parental care. However, adoption rate is low - 5% of the number children living in institutions, but trend is increasing. In contrast to guardianship and adoption, foster care is not part of the traditional system of substitute family services, and remains in a rudimentary state of development. It has neither a legislative nor a financial basis.

Family support services

Existing Medical-psychological commissions are being transformed into the Psychological-medico-pedagogical Consultations (PMPS) for parents, and are responsible for diagnosing, treatment and rehabilitation of children with disabilities, prevention of institutionalisation, promoting parenting skills. They are the only bodies competent for making a decision on institutional placement of such children. As a result of their work the number of children with disabilities entering formal care² reduced by 30%. Currently 4 PMPCs are functioning. A Parents Education Centre for promotion of inclusive education for children with disabilities was established in cooperation with PMPC in a kindergarten in Dushanbe. Some families do not receive appropriate services because they are afraid to reveal they have a child with a disability. Lack of efficient system of family support remains a serious problem and is one of main reasons for social orphanage of disabled children and their placement in closed-type institutions.

14 graduates of Masters Programme in social work of Stockholm University are supposed to be manager and supervisors in the field of child protection. The establishment of a degree course in social work at the National State University is a valuable next step towards the long-term resolution of the problem of professional capacity.

Main reform news

The Commission on Child Rights has been established within the government under the leadership of a Deputy Prime-Minister. New Child Rights Departments have been created in 9 pilot raions in order to strengthen the child care system at the local level, including development of new services. These Child Rights Departments are expected to be established country-wide within 3 years.

A de-institutionalization programme has been realised by the Commission on Child Rights in 5 pilot institutions, 3 of which were transformed into regular schools

² *Children in formal care* are those living outside their biological families or adoptive families (including institutions, guardianship and foster families). *Institutional (residential) care* refers to children residing in institutions (e.g. orphanages, children's homes, boarding schools, etc).

with day care where vocational education is integrated in daily schedules. More than 1500 children were deinstitutionalised in the 4 years of the programme.